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# 'Shadowy Distaff Presidency' Depicted by Regan

By David Hoffman  
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Former White House chief of staff Donald T. Regan depicts Nancy Reagan in his new memoir as responsible for a "shadowy distaff presidency" that featured an astrologer influencing all major scheduling decisions and the First Lady ruthlessly ordering Cabinet members fired while the president reacted passively.

Describing her as "the random factor in the Reagan presidency," the former chief of staff adds: "Mrs. Reagan regarded herself as the president's alter ego not only in the conjugal but also in the political and official dimensions, as if the office that had been bestowed upon her husband by the people somehow fell into the category of worldly goods covered by the marriage vows."

Regan claims that Nancy Reagan sought to have the late William J. Casey dismissed as CIA director when he was recovering from brain surgery, that she attempted to force out Labor Secretary Raymond J. Donovan when he was under investigation and that she sought the ouster of Health and Human Services Secretary Margaret M. Heckler.

Regan describes the First Lady as gripped by a need to consult the astrologer on the timing of virtually all major speeches, travel and other appearances by the president. For example, the astrologer, identified yesterday by Time magazine as San Francisco socialite Joan Quigley, cautioned Mrs. Reagan that the president should avoid public appearances in early 1987. Regan writes, leading to a prolonged period of isolation for President Reagan when the Iran-contra scandal was unfolding.

Regan says White House scheduling was a "long established floating seance" and recounts that when former deputy White House chief of staff Michael K. Deaver revealed to Regan the role of the astrologer, he advised Regan to "humor" the First Lady.

"At least this astrologer is not as kooky as the last one," Deaver said, according to Regan.

The White House reacted strongly to Regan's book yesterday afternoon, hours after the release of excerpts appearing this week in Time magazine. "Vindictiveness and revenge are not admirable qualities and are not worthy of comment. Donald Regan's attempts to defame the First Lady on Mother's

Day no less, are certainly in that category," said a statement telephoned to reporters by a White House spokesman.

In addition to Nancy Reagan, the former chief of staff blames top Reagan assistants and Cabinet members for the failures and controversies that occurred while he was chief of staff. He faults former national security advisers John M. Poindexter and Robert C. McFarlane and former NSC aide Oliver L. North for much of the Iran-contra scandal.

"The amateurism of McFarlane, Poindexter, and North when they attempted to behave like intelligence operatives, combined with their astounding gullibility, had virtually foreordained failure," Regan says. In a reference to Poindexter, he says, "Whatever may have been said afterward in attempts to rationalize this appalling sabotage of the presidency, the fact remains that people Ronald Reagan trusted put lies in his mouth and very nearly destroyed him as a result."

In the book, "For the Record: From Wall Street to Washington," published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Regan expressed no regrets about his own behavior or judgment during his two years as chief of staff. He depicts himself as a loyal disciple of the president who was constantly victimized by leaks to the press and by others who wanted to subvert the Reagan agenda.

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Regan credits himself with a large role in the enactment of tax overhaul legislation; with urging the president to nominate Judge Antonin Scalia to the Supreme Court instead of Judge Robert H. Bork; with having "encouraged" the president to deal with the new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, and with creating a game plan for the first two years of Reagan's second term.

Saying he shared an "easy rapport" with the president, Regan recounts how, when he wanted to resign as treasury secretary in 1984 after his economic advice had been leaked to The Washington Post, the president urged him to stay, saying, "You're the only friend I have around here. If you go, I'll have to get my hat and go with you." Regan also relates how the president was convinced that "the Regans and the Reagans were the same family" based on genealogical investigations.

While often proclaiming his devotion to the Reagan agenda, Regan says the administration was often filled with subordinates who had different goals than the president's. He expresses irritation at one of his earliest rivals, former Office of Management and Budget director David A. Stockman, and others who urged Reagan to raise taxes. "He was promoting much of his own policy and following his own agenda, which was not necessarily that of the president," Regan says of Stockman.

"This baffling system, in which the president seldom spoke, while his advisers proposed measures that contradicted his ideas and promises, created uncertainty in a situation that cried out for action," he comments.

Regan describes an administration that was rarely directed by the president. In four years at Treasury, he says, he never met with Reagan alone to discuss economic policy. "I was flying by the seat of my pants," he adds. "The president never told me what he believed or what he wanted to accomplish in the field of economics." Reagan was "content to exercise the symbolic powers of his office—and his astonishing skill in doing so was of course the very thing that made success possible."

In other examples, Regan says that "officials in the State Department . . . seemed to welcome the fall of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines in direct contravention of official U.S. policy and the president's wishes." According to Regan, when the president was given the chief of staff's plan for 1985 and 1986, the president handed it back with a simple "it's good, Don."

"He had no questions to ask, no objections to raise, no instructions to issue," Regan recalls. At another point, in early 1987, Regan describes the president as appearing to "be in the grip of lassitude." At another time, Regan recalls how a fireplace chimney became clogged in the West Wing and guards raced around the building to find the source of the smoke—discovering that it was in the president's study. Reagan had remained there, working, despite the smoke because "he hadn't wanted to bother anybody," Regan says.

By contrast, Regan paints Nancy Reagan as a powerful influence. In the book, Regan never quotes the president directly, only paraphrasing, but he repeatedly quotes Mrs. Reagan directly, noting that she had a "familiar stammer" when under pressure or when her "secret friend," the astrologer, came into the conversation.

"I'll, uh, uh, uh, have a discussion about that and get back to you," Nancy Reagan is quoted as telling Regan when he pressed for approval of a date for a news conference.

According to Regan, the First Lady telephoned him repeatedly after Casey's December 1986 brain surgery, urging that the CIA director be forced out. When Regan says he protested, in part because it was the Christmas holiday, he claims the First Lady responded angrily, "You're more interested in protecting Bill Casey than in protecting Ronnie! He's dragging Ronnie down!"

Regan writes that Mrs. Reagan also sought to get rid of then-White House communications director Patrick J. Buchanan, had once criticized Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger for his intransigence on the defense buildup, and ordered

the elimination of language on abortion from Reagan's 1987 State of the Union Address. "I don't give a damn about the right-to-lifers," she is quoted as saying.

But Regan reserves his sharpest criticism of Mrs. Reagan for her reliance on the astrologer, which he says extended to the timing of

events during the first Reagan-Gorbachev summit in 1985. "The large number of details involved must have placed a heavy burden on the poor woman, who was called upon not only to choose auspicious moments for meetings between the two most powerful men on our planet, but also to draw up horoscopes that presumably provided clues to the character and probable behavior of Gorbachev," he says.

Regan says the frustration of dealing with the astrologer was "far greater" than "any other I had known in nearly 45 years of working life." The astrologer was the reason Mrs. Reagan did not attend the Reykjavik, Iceland, summit in 1986, he says. Regan claims he warned the First Lady that the president was "going down in flames" during the early Iran-contra disclosures but, based on the astrologer's warnings, she refused to allow the president to discuss it with the news media.

The former chief of staff gives a familiar accounting of his view of the Iran-contra scandal, saying that Poindexter and McFarlane operated independently of him and that he had little or no knowledge of what they were doing. Regan devotes extensive portions of the memoir to the scandal, often saying that the president was confused because of bad advice from McFarlane and Poindexter.

For example, he says that Poindexter wrongly informed Reagan that all the missiles sold to Iran could fit in a single cargo plane and "the president believed that." Regan writes that he asked Poindexter to check it out and Poindexter "sheepishly" came back and said it was actually two planeloads. The analogy was used by the president in a speech.

In the book, Regan omits his own role in spreading wrong information at the time. In an interview with The Post on Nov. 13, 1986, he was

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asked how many arms were shipped to Iran. "We are saying tonight something that I think is pertinent here," he said. "That all of the shipments were small in quantity because they'd all fit in one cargo plane had they all gone at the one time."

Regan says the president "was not telling the whole truth" to the country "because he did not know the whole truth."

Regan frequently criticizes "leaks" to the press, and says one reason the recordkeeping during the Iran affair was so poor is that leaks "had achieved such epidemic proportions that the inner circle was afraid to take notes lest they read them the next day in the newspapers." Regan says McFarlane and Poindexter were "driven mad by leaks." Regan omits mention of the extraordinary shredding of documents that North acknowledged to Congress last summer.

Regan rejects the Tower board charge that he was responsible for the White House "chaos" after the Iran scandal broke. He also denies a report that he urged the president to change his testimony to the Tower board so it would be consistent with his own. Regan also has harsh words in the book for many officials and a few journalists, including this reporter.

The former chief of staff also provides an unusual footnote to Casey's role in the scandal. He claims Casey urged the president to announce that North had violated the law by not informing him of details about the diversion of funds to aid the contras, then have North and Poindexter appear on television to "tell the whole story."

"After that, the president can pardon them," Casey suggested.

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